



from the Garden

By Joan Pinkham

This last full month of winter can seem bleak and brutal, but February isn't all bad for those of us marooned in the frozen north. It begins with the absurdity of Groundhog Day, celebrated romance this week and every four years includes an extra day.

Nights that can be colder than anything December has to offer can be beautiful under the light of the Hunger Moon and although our winter gardens are hidden under a mantle of snow, branches encased in ice shimmer and glitter like crystal. With the arrival of more sunshine and longer days, our plants are growing faster and looking to us for more water and feeding. You and your children can have a lot of fun by planting fruit pips and stones. By saving your orange, tangerine, grapefruit and lemon pips and date, apricot, avocado and peach stones, you can have green, bushy house plants at absolutely no cost. Just push the pip or stone into a small pot filled with soil. Cover with an inverted glass jar and leave in a warm, dark spot until germination takes place. Then bring the pot into the light and remove the jar.

The Old Farmer's Almanac tells us "the back of the winter is now broken" and to those of us dreaming of bursting buds and greenery, we welcome once again the arrival of the Horticultural Society's Spring Garden and Flower Show. The 108th season opens Saturday, March 17 and continues through Sunday, March 25 at the Commonwealth Pier Exhibition Hall.

Be sure to watch for the Norwell Garden Group's exhibit which will consist of a window display of herbs they are growing themselves. This will be the first year the

members have submitted an entry and we wish them luck. Also look for the display designed by members of the Indoor Light Garden Society of America. Franey Way is vice president and program chairman of the New England Chapter and says they have plans for a bay window show-how to grow plants with supplemental light — should be lovely. They will also demonstrate how to convert a closet into a propagating unit and a den bookshelf will be transformed into a display of plants growing under lights. See, you don't need a greenhouse or sunny windowsill to grow plants indoors!

More proof that February isn't all bad lies in the fact that by the end of the month our days will be 10 hours and 59 minutes long, 55 minutes longer than on Feb. 1. Everyone is hoping that Feb. 26 will be a sunny day, for that's when a partial eclipse occurs. The eclipse begins at 11:06 a.m. and ends at 1:36 p.m. Always remember not to look at the sun with the naked eye. Among the very special programs being offered to children at the South Shore Natural Science Center during vacation week occurs on Feb. 24 when there will be a solar eclipse celebration for children ages 5 and 6. It's a surprise!

"Rain, sleet and snow" can't stop the U.S. Mails, so they say and it does little to discourage our avid birders either. All are invited to join the South Shore Bird Club on Sunday, the 25th, when they tour the Manomet, Plymouth and Duxbury area. Bundle up, grab your binoculars and meet with them at the Purity Supreme Market at the intersection of Rtes. 44 and 3 in Plymouth at 9 a.m.

One of the few quaking bogs in this part of the nation is

being readied for opening to the public on June 2, the anniversary date for its dedication by the late Cap'n Bill Vinal. It is hoped that all will join in supporting the fund drive which is just starting by sending contributions to Everett Russell, 17 School St., Norwell. Al Short of Cohasset has beautiful colored slides showing the rare plants and trees which seldom grow in this part of the country. If your group is interested in viewing them, just give him a call.

Now that so many people are turning to wood burning stoves in an effort to cut back on ever-rising oil bills, the sounds of chain saws and axes herald the crash of falling trees. One wonders whether this resource will in time be threatened, but Conservation Commissioner Warren Harrington of Marshfield assures us that in his town there's plenty of firewood for years to come. The precarious February weather makes the Commission hesitate to set a date for another woodgathering session on conservation land. Harrington says wood is a renewable resource and the forests we see have sprung up since the days of farmlands. The popular wood-gathering sessions have only thinned out 30 acres of woodlands out of the seven hundred Marshfield owns.

When people complain because even the bluejays are boycotting their feeders, you know there's a problem. Usually, the appearance of these beautiful, tropical-looking birds cause only mutterings when they scare away the smaller birds, but now their absence is cause for concern. Bev Litchfield says one theory is that because of an acorn

shortage (due to an explosion in the squirrel population?) the bluejays are looking elsewhere. Also mystifying to many is the apparent lack of interest in home feeders shown by many of our feathered friends. That's probably because of the open winter we've been having, Bev explains. But, then again, how explain the fact that she hasn't had even one evening grosbeak at her feeder, yet two miles away, Laura Jacobs has had flocks of up to 40? It's not all bad, however, for Bev and friends saw four different species of owls on a recent trip to the North Shore. A great grey owl was seen in Ipswich for three days and then found again in Newbury. For the past two weeks snowy owls have been seen on the Driftway and short-eared owls have been seen in Duxbury and Marshfield marshes.

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Hope to see you soon,
Janet

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